

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 3-5 and 20-30 are pending in the present application. Claims 25-30 are newly added by the present amendment. Support for new Claims 25-30 can be found at least at Fig. 3 and pp. 8-9 of the originally filed specification. No new matter is added.

In the Office Action, Claims 3-5 and 20-24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Yokomizo et al. (U.S. Pat. 6,321,266) in view of Venkatraman et al. (U.S. Pat. 6,139,177, herein Venkatraman). Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

The present application claims priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) to provisional application serial no. 60/017,398, which was filed on May 14, 1996 and provides clear support for the subject matter recited in pending Claims 3-5 and 20-24. This May 14, 1996 filing date antedates the April 25, 1997 filing date (as well as the December 3, 1996 filing date of parent application no. 08/760,164) of Venkatraman. Therefore, Venkatraman is not available as prior art against the present application, and Applicant respectfully requests that the rejection of Claims 3-5 and 20-24 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), based in part on Venkatraman, be withdrawn.

Further, each of new Claims 25-30 depend from one of independent Claims 3 and 21, and are also supported by provisional application serial no. 60/017,398. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that Claims 3-5 and 20-30 are in condition for formal allowance.

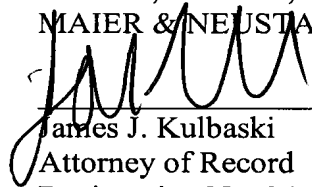
Consequently, for the reasons discussed in detail above, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. Therefore, a Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

Application No. 10/625,509  
Reply to Office Action of May 1, 2008

Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned representative at the below listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

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